

**Notes from District 8 - Community Meeting
10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness
City of Long Beach**

Date: Saturday October 08, 2005
Time: 1 – 3 PM
Location: North Branch Library
5571 Orange Ave, City of Long Beach, 8th District (Rae Gabelich, Council Member)

Opening Remarks:

Joe Colletti, Consultant from the Institute for Urban Research and Development (IURD), made the opening remarks and explained the purpose of the meeting. It was explained that several jurisdictions throughout the country have been putting together strategies to reduce homelessness in cities. Part of their success has been due to their ability to obtain feedback from all segments of cities unlike ever before. The meeting was called in order to gather comments from the general public in the 8th District of the City of Long Beach concerning homelessness to inform a Working Group and ultimately a Steering Committee established by the Mayor to make recommendations to the City of Long Beach 10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness. Attendees were encouraged to fill out a Volunteer Survey if they wished to become part of the Working Group that will advise the Steering Committee on homelessness issues. Attendees were also encouraged to take a Public Comment sheet for future comments.

The following items were passed out to encourage further input:

- a. Volunteer Survey
- b. Public Comment Sheet
- c. Explanation of the 10 year strategy

Mr. Colletti introduced the following individuals:

1. Jonathan Kraus-Chief of Staff for Rae Gabelich, Council member of the 8th District
2. Gary Sheldon, HSAC
3. Jack Garrett, IURD

Mr. Colletti explained the agenda and process for the meeting. First, individuals were encouraged to take a card to speak publicly. Second, there was a time for discussion. Rules of order were explained to the participants. No individual spoke for more than 5 min. We are currently in second month, could take up to 18 months for full process. Done regionally, LA County conducting four strategies, this is one of the four.

Summary of Public Comments:

Annette Labarca - How do we end homelessness unless we redefine what homelessness is? With low paying jobs in Long Beach, people are not able to get housing. One idea would be to put tents in certain areas by the 405 freeway. It would provide some type of housing. I have talked to many homeless people- a good number that collect General Relief-\$198/month and \$149 for food stamps. There are no apartments available for that price. Also need to look at how to provide income to pay

for low-income housing. Homeless people that she has spoken to would rather be in a tent than a homeless shelter. Improve the shelter system and not call that homelessness would be closer to the plan. Annette offered to provide business card with cell phone number to contact. If anyone is interested in getting involved she is at council meetings every week.

Susan Price - Dome Village in L.A. and Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon were similar to City of Long Beach proposal. These places were created out of a short-term need. These programs have been relatively successful. And have been around for years.

Joe - Ten year plan uses HUD's definition of homelessness.

Annette - suggested that we redefine the term homelessness to end it.

Summary of Discussion

Joe Colletti opened discussion: In order to be successful, 10-year strategy needs community input.

There are more than 200 10-year plans in the US. Plans focus on different aspects of homelessness. Approximately 10% have completed the 10-year planning process.

In review of approximately 17 strategies, every community is unique and some focus on different groups of the homeless. Some things may or may not be appropriate for Long Beach.

It is clear that there is a need to focus on prevention. City of Long Beach is ranked 6th in total poverty in the U.S. Many people are at risk for homelessness. 2000 Census Bureau-50,000 people-members of households make less than 26,000 a year. They are at risk because of limited household income.

Susan Price - poverty line is more like 19%. Many people are renters. Some jurisdictions help households from becoming homeless by having supplemental resources such as reduced transportation and healthcare. Some strategies have noted that providing food and clothing has helped prevent households from becoming homeless. Communities have wrestled with the best use of resources.

Annette - stated that she knows a woman who has been working with Parkinson's collecting SSI around \$502.00/month. It took two months to get the SSI going. She has been denied ability to get food stamps.

Joe - Some strategies focus on mainstream resources: Social Security, food stamps, and temporary assistance for needy families. You have to know how to navigate the system to get benefits. HUD begins to focus more and more on mainstream resources.

Janet Brooks - How about getting sums raised? Mainstream resource funds are too low. How do we go about getting the sums raised?

Joe - G.R. 12 years ago was \$352.00. Single room occupancy rent was \$200.00. Now G.R. is down to \$212.00 and rent is \$800.00 a month. Rent is going up and G.R. is going down. Some people with permanent disabilities are not able to work.

Susan Price - Historically public benefits could be used to stay housed. The last five years fixed income people are becoming homeless. In Long Beach 60% of people are renters 40% are owners. 60% are at the will of the rental market. Unintended consequence of increasing rent is that families have to move into together.

Joe - SSI person with permanent disability gets less than \$800.00 a month. That goes to rent money. Nothing left over. Individuals receiving G.R. are generally employable as discussed in other meetings. Can we get SSI raised by 25%? Unlikely

Gary - Is there housing in the city for those people at any price?

Susan - Vacancy rate is about 5%. More vacancy is created because rent prices are out of people's range.

Joe - difficult to answer Gary's questions. Answer is part of strategy. Susan mentioned the "Cash not Care" program in San Francisco

Susan - Multi-county ability is required to coordinate a change in policies. In Long Beach it is harder to make policy shifts. In San Francisco the G.R. was \$220.00 a month. The people were given \$50.00/month and the rest of the money went into housing. Hotels were converted into efficiency units. No eligibility criteria.

Joe - Every idea is worth bringing up even if it doesn't work.

Annette - We should be able to tap into something because of the beach and miles of river. Tap into other resources between state and city.

Joe - Is affordable housing available? Most strategies are getting away from shelters. It is costly for communities to operate shelters.

Gary - Is it possible to look into converting warehouse space into SRO units. It is happening in other cities. Did make a recommend to the city.

Susan - It was referred to planning and building years ago.

Gary - Skid Row is a neighborhood in L.A. where much of the conversion has taken place.

Janet Brooks - If we can convert department stores into lofts. I would like to see an ordinance passed to use buildings for SRO.

Joe - To clarify... we are talking about permanent housing-SRO

Susan - work force housing.

Joe - Permanent housing with rent, utilities. Not a shelter.

Annette - SRO is bigger and better than a tent.

Gary - Skid Row SRO has shared facilities.

Annette - Places in Long Beach go for \$270.00 a week for a garbage hole.

Kristin - There is a lot of warehouse space.

Janet - Why can't it be converted?

Joe - Converting warehouse is a more difficult model than SRO... Not a group living situation.

Janet - separate units.

Susan: The Villages of Cabrillo has mostly SRO for homeless veterans.

Joe - A couple of jurisdictions that have mixed families in 20, 30, 40 unit housing units

Janet - There should be incentives to build that type of housing.

Kristin - That is what redevelopment is about.

Janet - Give developers an incentive to build units

Dan Presberg - 20% is set aside for re-development for low to moderate income Long Beach has attempted to get builders to do that. Purpose of redevelopment is to reduce blight.

Jon Kraus - 20% is being used for affordable housing. Administered by Long Beach. There is some effort in this area. Want to find developers who are willing to partner.

Joe - City of Pasadena just finished a ten-year strategy. 30% of units being constructed will be affordable. 30% is for moderate-income households. Where you build has to include affordable housing.

Janet - Lived in a community where building codes specified amount of square footage. This stopped a slum from happening. Keeping a minimum and maximum creates a more diverse community. Recommend reevaluating building codes.

Joe - Another focus has been chronic homelessness. Deals with multi service center. Over a given year 20,000 will become homeless. About 90% are not homeless a year later. 10% remain homeless. A lot of jurisdictions have focused on chronic homelessness. Need to address the most visible and many resources go into addressing this. One way to address this is through the Assertive Community Treatment Teams: bring services to the individual.

Gary - ACTT is a step beyond mental health services.

Joe - not a step beyond, but different

Gary - If a community member sees a homeless person and calls ACCTT what happens next?

Joe - services are brought to that person

Gary - Food?

Joe - Not the main focus

Gary - Majority of funds are going to 10% of the population. It is a different way of using the resources.

Joe - ACTT is not a new idea

Janet - Is it more effective?

Joe - The jury is still out. The belief is that it will be.

Susan - In other states ACT teams are funded by Medi-Cal.

Annette - introduces Shabukee. He is gay male that has been thrown out of family. He was living in a group home and was attacked by other males. Can we get the children education and housing coming out of the group home?

Joe - Foster care?

Annette - he went back home but it was unbearable.

Joe - ACT teams have been doing discharge planning so not to discharge people into homelessness.

Gary - It is as simple as giving a direction that something is good idea to have it pushed forward.

Joe - not just at the city level all levels

Susan - Need to be in compliance to discharge

Joe - It needs to be coordinated. Discharge into a shelter is not appropriate. A lot of jurisdictions recognize that social service system is ineffective. It gets the brunt of criticism. Almost every year it helps 100's of individuals. Is there room for improvement? I'm sure there is. Multi-service centers have been very effective.

Last Comments:

Kristin - I love Long Beach and this conscientious group of people.

Gary – HSAC can suggest policies to city council. Has a role in ten-year process. This past Wednesday revisit progress and policies in city council.

Connie - How many live in this district? How are you advertising for the meetings? If no one lives in this district how is it a true a representation of the community?

Dan - Connie, have you tried going to the Long Beach Department of Education to distribute flyers?

Connie- many flyers don't make it home.

Susan - anyone can attend the meetings. Council members should know when it's their district. -Inform residents. There is criticism that there is not enough homeless population. It is difficult to get them here.

Joana - suggests posting flyer in the Laundromat. Joana goes on to share her experiences being homeless women for the last eight years. She thinks that many people have a misconception of homelessness. She has a very difficult time with the police in Long Beach. She does cleaning every two weeks for \$80.00. She says that she holds LVN degrees and has taken classes for an RN.

Connie - Have you ever been helped at the multi-service center? How can we help you?

Susan - Homelessness is not a crime. Police are responsible to homeless people in that area. Encourage residents to call multi-service center.

Meeting adjourned